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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 000570

SIPDIS

LONDON FOR POL/RIEDEL

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TAGS: PGOV PTER ASEC PHUM PREL PINR NP

SUBJECT: NEPALESE ARMY ROUTS MAOIST TRAINING CAMP; BANDH PREPARATIONS

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MICHAEL E. MALINOWSKI, REASONS 1.5(B),(D)

Army Takes Out Terrorist Training Camp

1. (C) Sixty-five Maoist insurgents were killed in a joint Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) and Armed Police Force (APF) operation March 17 against a suspected Maoist training camp in Gumsa, Rolpa district, about 300 miles northwest of Kathmandu, the head of the APF confirmed to Post March 19. No prisoners were taken. A police source told us that after the operation musket guns and homemade explosives had been confiscated from the training camp.

RNA: Offensive to Continue

2. (C) An RNA contact judged the operation a success, and pointed out that it resulted in the death of Maoist leaders and trainers. He indicated that follow-up operations will continue and similar operations would be conducted in the future in order to exert pressure on the Maoists in Rolpa and other areas they control. The operation demonstrated the need to conduct joint operations with the police, served to improve the police's morale, and showed that the unified command concept was working. Our contact added that the RNA did not just want to rely on helicopters, and wanted to develop its capacity to conduct operations on foot. (Comment: The RNA recognizes that the summer monsoon will hamper heliborne operations, and that offensive operations will of necessity involve infantry on foot.)

Preparations for Upcoming Bandh

3. (C) At a meeting at the Home Ministry March 19, the head of the APF told A/DCM and Poloff that the government had instructed public servants to report to work during the April 2-6 general strike ("bandh") called by the Maoists. Government vehicles would be out on the roads. The Home Ministry would issue directives and public notices to encourage people to conduct business as usual, and police personnel would be "vigilant" in apprehending agitators who attempted to shut down shops, offices or schools. RNA officers informed Post separately that they would step up vigilance and urge the government to carry on as normal.

Comment: Boxing Days

4. (C) The RNA's apparently successful operation against the training camp - smack in the middle of the Maoists' stronghold - gives a boost to the security forces just as they had begun to feel the rope against their backs. The Maoists' may have thought that they could go ten rounds and win on a split decision. Having seen the security forces' right jab in Rolpa, they may now be revisiting that strategy. Resource constraints and a lack of trained reserves will continue to hold back the army. However - and hopefully - our RNA contact's statement about not relying on helicopters may mean that the military is finally taking the war to the insurgents - on the guerillas terms.

MALINOWSKI